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TAGS: ASEC EAGR ECON KCRM KFRD OAS AMGT APER VE

SUBJECT: COUNTRY CLEARANCE APPROVAL FOR US DELEGATION TO
OAS TIP CONFERENCE

REF: A) STATE 33755 B) STATE 35668

¶1. The Embassy grants country clearances for the visit to Venezuela of T. March Bell, Mark Mittelhauser, Pedro Moreno, Stacy D. Williams, and Carla Menares Bury from Monday, March 13 through Saturday, March 18. This approval is granted on the condition that the travelers will be utilizing an official or diplomatic passport with an appropriate Venezuelan visa. (See paragraph titled, Passport Requirements.)

The purpose of the visit is to attend the OAS Trafficking in Persons Conference to be held on Margarita Island from Tuesday, March 14 through Friday, March 17.

¶2. Control officer for the visit will be LaTranda Martin. Address: Embassy of the United States, Calle F con Calle Suapure, Colinas de Valle Arriba, Caracas, Venezuela. Telephone numbers: Office: 58-212-907-8531. Cellphone: 0414-140-4615. Embassy after-hours direct line for the Marine security guard is 58-212-975-9821.

Hotel accommodations for the delegation have been arranged and confirmed at the Hilton Hotel on Margarita Island (confirmation numbers will be sent via email). Address: Calle Los Uveros Urb. Costa Azul, Margarita Island, 6301. Telephone Number: 58-295-260-1700. Fax: 58-295-262-0810 The nightly rate for hotel accommodations is USD 109.

TRAVEL NOTICE - TRANSPORTATION BETWEEN THE AIRPORT AND CARACAS: In December the Gov indefinitely closed the first bridge on the Caracas-La Guaira highway. The highway is the principal link between Caracas and Maiquetia Simon Bolivar International Airport. On February 26, the 2.4 km Bridge Bypass Route (BBR) was opened to traffic. On March 6 post management approved the elimination of the armored airport shuttle service/daylight travel restriction and returned to using private transport services with the following provisions: The BBR or the Galipan road (accessible via 4-wheel drive only) are the only approved routes to/from the airport and La Guaira. For safety and security reasons, the "Carretera Vieja" route is not authorized for use. Post will continue to assess the situation. It is recommended you remain in contact with the Embassy regarding any possible changes.

PASSPORT REQUIREMENTS

All passengers who enter Venezuela on official travel (including third country nationals) require a visa. Travelers should not use tourist passports.

Venezuelan immigration requires citizens of the United States and certain other countries to have at least six months of validity remaining on their passports to enter Venezuela. While this law is not uniformly enforced, some U.S. citizens have been denied entry. Ensure your passport has at least six months validity from the date of arrival to Venezuela.

CURRENCY / EXCHANGE RATE

The exchange rate is USD 1 = 2150 Bolivares (Bs).

Visitors should bring a major credit card. Travelers checks are not recommended as they are only honored in a few locations. It is possible to exchange cash at major hotel chains in Caracas (personal checks are not accepted).

DEPARTURE EXPENSES

An airport user fee of Bs. 84.000 (approx. USD 40) is levied upon departure for holders of official and diplomatic passports. Holders of tourist passports must pay the user fee plus an exit tax, for a total of Bs. 117.600 (approx. USD 55). Payment of both must be made in Bolivares.

SECURITY

At the Airport. Many drivers -- often wearing badges identifying them as "taxi officials"-- have been known to rob unwary travelers. If someone asks if you are with the American Embassy: 1) do not give you name and 2) ask for the name of the person he is seeking and identification. Do not go with the individual if he cannot give you the information you request. Call the embassy.

Airport parking lot robberies are increasing. The Embassy advises all persons to stay away from airport parking lots, except for diplomatic lots located close to the terminal.

General Crime. There is a significant level of common street crime in certain areas of Caracas and other major cities in Venezuela. These crimes are of the pick-pocketing,

purse-snatching variety and visitors are advised to be aware of their surrounding and to be particularly alert in crowded areas. Jewelry items, particularly gold-colored, attract the attention of thieves and should be left in a safe place along with other valuables.

If you are confronted in a robbery situation, the RSO suggests that you comply with the criminals' demands. Do not attempt to run or antagonize the perpetrator. Most criminals only seek cash and jewelry items; many will resort to violence if you resist their demands.

To avoid being victims of a crime, visitors should remain alert to their surroundings and maintain constant control of purses, backpacks, briefcases and luggage.

The Embassy recommends the use of hotel and radio dispatched taxis and group travel whenever possible, especially after dark. Travelers should carry only the minimum cash needed and, if possible, no credit cards when venturing outside of the hotel.

Civil Disturbances. Travelers to Venezuela should be aware of the potential for violent demonstrations, especially in the urban centers, and exercise appropriate caution by standing well clear of public protests, police lines and barricades.

CAR RENTAL

Car rentals must be pre-authorized with the Agency responsible for your visit.

MEDICAL

Venezuela recommends that all travelers be vaccinated prior to arrival. As yellow fever vaccine is difficult to obtain in Venezuela, do not count on Embassy to provide vaccination. In addition, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs requires a Yellow Fever vaccination certificate for travelers older than one year of age arriving from various countries. Information about vaccination requirements for travel to Venezuela may be

obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Internet site at <http://www.cdc.gov/travel>.

The water is considered contaminated. Drink only bottled water or carbonated soft drinks and avoid ice in drinks. Do not eat raw vegetables or fruits unless they have been disinfected, peeled or cooked. Wash your hands often with hot, soapy water.

Cases of dengue fever and malaria are reported throughout Venezuela each year. Travelers planning to spend time outdoors should bring insect repellent; wear long trousers; and avoid wet areas. Symptoms include fever, headaches, diarrhea and general malaise. While rarely fatal, you should see a doctor if you experience these symptoms.

The Embassy does not make or guarantee payments to medical providers on behalf of non-U.S. Government employees. All individuals should bring clear evidence of medical insurance coverage. In case emergency evacuation is required, non-USG employees, USG contract staff, and locally employed staff from other posts must have adequate medical and air ambulance insurance and must carry the contact information with them. Venezuelan hospitals and physicians do not accept insurance documents and may require payment in cash or be credit card.

WEATHER

Daytime temperatures in Margarita are usually between 78 and 87 degree Fahrenheit. Although Margarita is basically a desert island, from June to July and November to January rain showers are common. Embassy recommends travelers bring a light sweater for evening outings and an umbrella, no matter the time of year.

COMMUNICATIONS WITH THE PRESS

Travelers are reminded that Public Affairs is responsible for handling press arrangements for both mission personnel and official visitors. Contact the Public Affairs Officer, Salome Hernandez, 58-212-907-8363 or the Press Attaché, Brian Penn, 58-212-907-8325 after arrival if you believe you may have contact with the press while in Venezuela.

BROWNFIELD